TRICENTENNIAL

Art deco movement left a legacy in S.A.

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SPORTS

Parker declares it's time to return

Injured guard says he'll play in tonight's game at home against Dallas. Page C1

Failure to win big games helps lead to Sumlin's firing as A&M coach. Page C1

Tom Reel / San Antonio Express-News

NATION

Embattled rep Conyers leaving post on Judiciary

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San Antonio Express-News

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BARRIER FOR BIRDERS

Photos by Bob Owen / San Antonio Express-News

Avid birder Tiffany Kersten stands on a trail at Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge near Hidalgo.

Border wall worries nature tourists, businesses

By Aaron Nelsen
RIO GRANDE VALLEY BUREAU

HARLINGEN — Paul Lombardi and Daniel Johnston flocked to the Rio Grande Valley to see birds — green jays and black-tailed gnatcatchers, pied-billed grebes and tropical parulas, to name a few.

The group of wildlife refuges along the meandering Rio Grande attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors, searching for species found nowhere else in the country.

Even as exotic birds continue to captivate visitors, these days, conversation often turns to President Donald Trump and the specter of his "big, beautiful" wall looming over the native habitat that remains here.

"I saw the rusty-brown wall today, and it was not a pleasant sight."

Daniel Johnston, bird-watcher

The existing border wall runs near the Old Hidalgo Pumphouse and World Birding Center.

"It's a shame," said Lombardi, a spry 76-year-old from the Salt Lake City area. "They can pretend that somehow all the animals are going to get around the wall, but they're not."

The 54 miles of existing border wall and bollard fencing already cut through parts of the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge wildlife corridor, but Trump's wall imperils several additional tracts, including the iconic Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, considered the crown jewel of the refuge system.

Earlier this month, organizers for two of the Valley's biggest annual events — the Texas Butterfly Festival and the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival

Border continues on A8

Town has key role in space race planning

Military vets work on engine testing

By Andrea Rumbaugh
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

McGREGOR — As SpaceX, the brainchild of boundary-pushing Elon Musk, has become one of the biggest players working on the next generation of space travel, its test site in this Central Texas town has been quietly fulfilling an essential role in its quest.

McGregor, less than 20 miles southwest of Waco, has grown to become SpaceX's second-largest location, in terms of employees. With the commercial space industry assuming a larger role in the evolving national space race, the Hawthorne, California-based company has been steadily increasing the size and workload at its McGregor test site, where it brings every one of its engines for testing.

"It is an optimistic time to be in the space industry," said Bill Ostrove, space market analyst for Forecast International, which provides consulting for aerospace and other industries. "There is a lot of capital and talent flowing into the industry right now. We're definitely seeing a lot of advances that haven't been made in a long time."

The space industry received more than $2 billion in equity investment through the first nine months of this year, according to a report from Space Angels, a network of angel investors focused on early-stage commercial space investments. That includes personal investments from individuals in the business such as Musk, Jeff Bezos of Amazon.com fame, Robert Bigelow and Richard Branson.

Bezos' Blue Origin, another of the bigger players working on powerful rockets, also has a base in Texas.

SpaceX has successfully launched 45 missions

Rockets continues on A2

Victim of domestic violence working to help others

Woman committed to telling her story of overcoming aftermath

By Emilie Eaton
STAFF WRITER

A year after her former boyfriend violently attacked her, threatening to slash her face with a piece of a broken mirror, Alexandra Gonzalez still dealt with reminders of that Saturday night in January 2013.

Gonzalez lost her job and struggled with sleepless nights, anxiety attacks, bouts of depression and feelings of guilt, anger and fear.

But slowly, with time, she found healing.

"I had to literally forgive myself for finding myself in this situation," said Gonzalez, 43. "It was his mistake, not mine. I didn't ask to be hit. I didn't ask to be almost killed."

"We've been taught it's shameful to talk about these things," Gonzalez added. "I decided I didn't want to be silent. I want to tell my story. I want to live."

Her story is a testament to the prevalence of domestic violence directed at women in the U.S. and the wide range of psychological and medical problems that survivors of domestic abuse experience.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that nearly 1 in 4 women have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime.

Tom Reel / San Antonio Express-News

Alexandra Gonzalez, violently attacked nearly five years ago, stands in front of a mural depicting efforts to challenge abuse.

Of those women, about 60 percent experienced fear and concerns for their safety after being attacked, while 52 percent had symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, according to the most recent National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, which is administered by the CDC.

Today, Gonzalez has a job again, and she volunteers at several nonprofit organizations that aim to end domestic violence. She's committed to telling her story and helping women who were once in her shoes.

"I want my children to know my story," Gonzalez said. "That I fought for my life several times, and that these experiences did not change my spirit, they did not change my heart."

After that fateful evening in 2013, Gonzalez's ex, Timothy Zapata, was arrested and charged with assault on a family member. It was then that Gonzalez learned that Zapata had been convicted of domestic

Abuse continues on A8

WEATHER

HIGH 76 | LOW 55 | Mostly sunny
Full report, C14

Subscriber bonus: Best and worst holiday jobs
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365 days of tacos

Tripas taco on a corn tortilla from Gibby's La Cocina. **ExpressNews.com/Tacos**

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